

**GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY**  
**GRADUATE LIBERAL STUDIES DEGREE PROGRAM SYLLABUS**

**MALS Foundational: Social Sciences**

Dr. Joseph P. Smaldone

**LSHV-402-01**

405 Golf Course Ct.

**Spring 2021: 12 Tuesdays**

Arnold, MD 21012; (410) 757-4771

**January 19 – April 27, 6:30-9:40pm**

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**\*\*\*PLEASE NOTE:**

- **Our class will meet VIA ZOOM only 12 times, 6:30 p.m.-9:40 p.m. See pp. 6-7 below for meeting schedule. During our 1<sup>st</sup> meeting we can discuss whether starting remaining class meetings earlier would be more convenient for all.**
- **Prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> class meeting**, read A. F. Repko & R. Szostak, *Interdisciplinary Research: Process & Theory*, Parts I & II (thru chap. 7).
- Depending on the size of our class, some written and oral presentation assignments may be modified to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to present their work.

**LSP General Learning Goals:** The Graduate Liberal Studies Program offers a course of study that engages students in reading, research, reflection, discussion, and writing. In the pursuit of the degree, students are to discern and wrestle with the content generally associated with the “liberal” arts in the root meaning of that term, namely, what it means for human beings to be endowed with freedom, what ennobles and enhances human freedom, and what responsibilities and obligations does it entail. The two general goals of the program, therefore, are to analyze and assess human values (who are we and what ought we to do?) and to undertake such study in an interdisciplinary fashion. The program thus draws from the social sciences as well as from those fields generally defined as the humanities (e.g., history, theology, philosophy, literature, and art), recognizing that the moral dimension of human life embraces social, political, and economic relationships as well as personal choices. The program culminates in an interdisciplinary thesis that successfully analyzes a question of value related to a student’s chosen field of study.

More explicitly, the program aims to engage the student in examining one or more of the following topics or similar topics as they are treated in various disciplines:

1. What it means to be human
2. What gives ultimate meaning to human life
3. What contributes to human flourishing

4. Where human life is heading
5. What constitutes the social dimension of humanity
6. What enables genuine community
7. How are human beings related to nature and creation as a whole
8. Elements of personal ethics
9. Principles of social justice and social ethics, including personal and social responsibilities

**Scope and Learning Goals of Foundational Courses:** This course is one of four required foundational courses (humanities, social sciences, science & society, and norms & ethics) offered by the LSP to facilitate graduate-level interdisciplinary study and research as part of the MALS curriculum. Collectively these courses aim to improve your analytical, research, and writing skills so you can realize the full potential of your learning experience throughout the program. They provide a solid intellectual foundation for the elective courses you will choose; enhance your ability to appreciate and conduct research on important questions and issues considered in your other courses; and prepare you for the successful conduct of your capstone thesis project.

**Regarding the thesis process,** these courses will help you to:

- formulate the specific thesis question;
- decide and develop an appropriate interdisciplinary research design;
- execute the research using appropriate qualitative and/or quantitative methods;
- construct a coherent and integrated set of empirical, logical, and value-based arguments laying out the thesis; and
- present your findings effectively and draw out their research and value implications.

Among the **core questions you will encounter in these foundational courses** are:

- What relationship(s) exist between & among the various disciplinary categories (i.e., humanities, social sciences, natural sciences)? Are they complementary? Supplementary? Contradictory? Overlapping? Mutually exclusive? Other?
- What relationship(s) exist between & among the various disciplines within the humanities/social sciences/natural sciences? Are they complementary? Supplementary? Contradictory? Overlapping? Mutually exclusive? Other?
- How do different disciplines offer different paths to identify and understand different aspects of the human experience and the quest for knowledge about ourselves and the world we inhabit?

- What are the foundational epistemological precepts of the humanities/social sciences/natural sciences? In what ways are they similar? Different?
- What can the humanities/social sciences/natural sciences tell us about the role of values in understanding human life and behavior?
- How norms and ethics affect individual and collective behavior?
- How do the humanities/social sciences/natural sciences manifest aspects of both “art” and “science?”
- Can the humanities/social sciences/natural sciences elucidate the presence and power of a moral universe?
- How can the humanities/social sciences/natural sciences contribute to our ability to understand and explain the individual and social dimensions of human life and the natural/physical world?
- In what ways can interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, and transdisciplinarity be understood and applied within the humanities/social sciences/natural sciences?
- How does the interdisciplinary research process work within the humanities/social sciences/natural sciences?
- How can we decide which disciplines are most relevant and useful to specific research questions?
- How can we achieve greater synthesis and integration in interdisciplinary understanding?
- How do we construct and conduct research designs incorporating relevant theory, logic, and methods?
- What are the normative and ethical dimensions and implications of potentially applicable research designs?
- Can we resolve conflicts between and among the different epistemological, analytical, and methodological paradigms prevailing in the humanities/social sciences/natural sciences?
- Can the social sciences be used to forecast human behavior? Predict human behavior?
- Can the humanities/social sciences/natural sciences improve human nature and human life?

**Scope and Learning Goals of Social Sciences Foundational Course:** This semester you have chosen to enroll in the **social sciences** course. Consistent with the goals of the LSP and the foregoing core questions, this course will address these questions from the standpoint of the social sciences. The required texts, reading assignments, class discussions and projects, and major research paper(s) seek to foster interdisciplinarity, analytical thinking, research and writing skills, and humanistic values.

The academic disciplines that are generally categorized as social sciences include Archaeology, Anthropology, Demography, Economics, Geography, History, Law, Linguistics, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology. Note that History is often considered to be among the humanities also, illustrating the artificiality of such classifications! In this course we will cover most of the social science disciplines listed above, but will devote more attention to those likely to be of interest and value to your MALS curriculum, and that reflect my own academic teaching, research, and publication experience in **history, political science (including comparative politics and international relations), sociology, and conflict and peace studies, as well as my professional experience in the foreign policy realm.**

**Specific learning objectives** for this course include acquisition and demonstration of graduate-level knowledge and understanding, and ability to discuss, explain, and as appropriate, apply the following:

- foundational epistemological precepts of the humanities/social sciences/natural sciences;
- epistemological and methodological issues and debates surrounding the creation of knowledge in the social and natural sciences;
- how different disciplines offer different paths to identify and understand different aspects of the human experience and our quest for knowledge;
- how the humanities/social sciences/natural sciences manifest aspects of both “art” and “science;”
- interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinary, cross-disciplinary, and transdisciplinarity, and how they can be understood and applied within the humanities/social sciences/natural sciences;
- the stages of the interdisciplinary research process, and how to design, conduct, and “publish” an interdisciplinary research project, including the ability to:
  - identify, acquire, analyze, and assess information relevant to interdisciplinary research from a range of fields, and from a variety of sources and perspectives;
  - draw upon and apply the theories, principles, methods, and findings of two or more academic/professional disciplines to the analysis of specific research questions;

- evaluate the respective advantages and limitations of qualitative and quantitative sources and methodologies, and employ them in interdisciplinary research;
- formulate and express arguments clearly and cogently both orally and in written form;
- write an article-length (20+ pp.) interdisciplinary research paper that approaches or attains publishable quality, on a course-related topic of special interest to you.
- the difference between forecasting and prediction, and how to use social research methods to forecast individual and group behavior (including international behavior);
- how the humanities/social sciences/natural sciences implicate and engage issues of values, norms and ethics.

### Required Texts:

1. Repko, A. F. & Szostak, R., *Interdisciplinary Research: Process & Theory*, 4th ed. (Sage Publishing, 2020/21)
2. A. Bhattacharjee, *Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (2012, **free, online**)
3. Geddes, Barbara, *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics* (Univ. of Michigan Press, 2010) – **free, online via Lauinger Library**

### Other Books of Interest:

Menken, S. & Kestra, M., eds., *An Introduction to Interdisciplinary Research* (Amsterdam University Press, c2016) – **free, online via Lauinger Library**

Maoz, Z. et al., *Multiple Paths to Knowledge in International Relations: Methodology in the Study of Conflict Management and Conflict Resolution* (Lexington Books, c2004)

Sprinz, D. F. & Wolinsky-Nahmias, Y., eds. *Models, Numbers, and Cases: Methods for Studying International Relations* (U. of Michigan Press, c2004)

### Bottom Lines: What's Required of You:

1. **read** 3 required texts listed above.
2. **read** several journal articles as assigned in **Course Outline & Assignments** section below.
3. **write** several 1-page summaries/critiques of journal articles as described in **Course Outline & Assignments** section below.

4. **write** a 3-5 pp. interdisciplinary research design for your proposed research paper.
5. **write** a 20 pp. research paper (which will incorporate the above research design).
6. **participate** actively in class discussions.
7. **present** your article summaries/critiques (several, 5-10 min. each).
8. **present** your final research paper w/appropriate aids (e.g., Powerpoint) (10-15 min.).

**Note:** Depending on class size, some of these assignments may be modified.

**Grades:** There will be no exams. Grades will be based on one written research paper worth 60%, and class participation (CP) worth 40%. Papers should be at least 20 pp. double-spaced//10 pp. single-spaced text (*excluding* notes, biblio. etc.). They will be evaluated on their intrinsic merits as well as the relative quality of the papers produced by other class members.

Depending on the size of our class, one or more class members will be assigned to find, read, prepare and present a 1-page *summary and assessment* of a peer-reviewed journal article that you deem to be an excellent exemplar of interdisciplinary research grounded in the specific discipline under review for that class session. *These assignments will count toward your CP grade.* There may also be opportunities to improve your CP grade by doing voluntary extra-credit assignments.

See details about class participation, writing assignments, and grading policies below; additional guidelines and information about papers and grading factors will be provided in class.

**Format:** This is a primarily a “readings course” with seminar-style focused discussion of issues, with a few short lectures from time to time. A series of discussion questions and/or mini-assignments keyed to the readings will be emailed to you each week to facilitate preparation for class meetings. Read assignments beforehand, be fully prepared for all meetings, and contribute actively to our discussions by framing issues, posing and responding to questions, and highlighting ethical concerns, etc. Everyone’s views are equally valued. You will also have an opportunity to present your ideas, assessments, and paper(s) to the class (*paper presentations last two classes*). Guest speakers may also be invited occasionally.

### **Course Calendar, Outline & Assignments (12 class meetings):**

1. **1/19 Course introduction and administration; Interdisciplinary Research I:** read Repko & Szostak, thru chap.7.
2. **1/26 Interdisciplinary Research II:** finish Repko & Szostak.
3. **2/2 Social Science Research I:** read Bhattacharjee, chaps. 1-5.

4. **2/9 Social Science Research II:** read Bhattacharjee, chaps. 6-10; try to **decide on a topic for your research project** by this date.

**NO CLASS 2/16**

5. **2/23 Social Science Research III:** read Bhattacharjee, chaps. 11-16.

**NO CLASS 3/2**

6. **3/9 Anthropology:** **1)** read one or more of the selected readings that will be supplied online, OR one or more peer-reviewed journal articles of your choosing on interdisciplinary anthropology; **2)** write a 1-page synopsis of one article in bullet format to share with the class.

7. **3/16 History:** **1)** read one or more of the selected readings that will be supplied online, OR one or more peer-reviewed journal articles of your choosing on interdisciplinary history – make notes on the readings to facilitate discussion; **2)** find, read, prepare and present a 1-page bullet-style *summary and assessment* of an article published in either *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* or *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (both free online access via Lauinger Library) that you consider to be an excellent exemplar of interdisciplinary history.

8. **3/23 Economics:** **1)** read one or more of the selected readings that will be supplied online, OR one or more peer-reviewed journal articles of your choosing on interdisciplinary economics – make notes on the readings to facilitate discussion; **2)** prepare and present a **3-5 pp. interdisciplinary research design for your proposed research paper**.

**NO CLASS 3/30**

9. **4/6 Psychology & Sociology:** **1)** read one or more of the selected readings that will be supplied online, OR one or more peer-reviewed journal articles of your choosing on interdisciplinary psychology, and one or more on interdisciplinary sociology – make notes on the readings to facilitate discussion; **2)** prepare and present a 1-2 pp. research design for a proposed interdisciplinary investigation of some psychology- or sociology-related research question of interest to you.

10. **4/13 Political Science/Comparative Politics:** **1)** read the selected articles that will be supplied online – make notes on the readings to facilitate discussion; **2)** prepare and present a 1-2 pp. research design for a proposed interdisciplinary investigation of some political science-related research question of interest to you; **3)** *skim* Geddes.

11. **4/20 International Relations:** **1)** read one or more of the selected readings that will be supplied online, OR one or more peer-reviewed journal articles of your choosing on interdisciplinary international relations – make notes on the readings to facilitate discussion; **2) one-half of the class will present their papers (volunteers, please!).**

12. **4/27 War & Peace:** **1)** read one or more of the selected readings that will be supplied online, OR one or more peer-reviewed journal articles of your choosing on interdisciplinary conflict studies – make notes on the readings to facilitate discussion; **2) remainder of class will present their papers; 3)** try to have your papers ready for submission.

## NO CLASS 5/4 – WORK ON YOUR PAPERS – PAPERS DUE 5/8

### Course Policies/Written Assignments:

1. *Class attendance* is expected/required. Notify me in advance of any anticipated absence from a subsequent class (and the reason), or ASAP if prior notice is impossible. If excused (e.g., required work-related travel, family emergency), you must make up the absence by writing a compensatory 2-3 pp. paper **or** adding 2-3 pp. to your research paper – your choice. The 2-3 pp. make-up papers should be on some aspect(s) of the reading assignments and/or questions for class discussion for the missed class. All make-up papers are due by the last class meeting. Extra-credit work will not count as compensatory papers. A one-grade penalty will be assessed for each *unexcused* absence (i.e., A to A-). *Two absences will be reported to the Dean and may result in withdrawal, regardless of reasons!*
2. *Class participation* (CP). Everyone is encouraged/expected to participate in class discussions, which are essential elements of graduate-level education. CP will be 40% of your grade. Your contributions to class discussions will weigh heavily in the evaluation of CP. Informed, thoughtful, and constructive questions, responses, presentations, and comments, based at least in part on reading assignments, are essential. *Frequent* commentary is welcome, as long as it “adds value” and does not “dominate.” So *speak up a few times at each class!* As noted above, article summary/presentation assignments, as well as final paper presentations will count toward CP.
3. *Writing assignments*. Written and verbal guidance will be provided in class. All class members have the same writing assignments. Papers are expected to meet high standards of originality, scholarship, and excellence, to demonstrate appropriate composition skills, and to use a wide range of relevant sources. DLS candidates are expected to meet professional standards.
4. *Paper topics*. Since each research paper and your approach to it are unique, we should have a “mutual understanding/expectation” about it. To this end, topics must be selected or changed with the consent of the instructor; outlines, bibliographies, and progress reports may be required. *Individual consultations are essential!*
5. *General research rule*. For a single 20+ page paper, *use/cite at least 20 specialized relevant books/journal articles and/or comparable Internet sources on the specific subject of the paper*. If your research project calls for extensive use of other materials such as original data, please discuss with me whether this standard warrants modification.
6. *Due dates & late penalties*. **If possible, please submit your papers and other written assignments by the last class meeting on 4/27. Officially, papers are due by 5/8. Papers should be submitted via email; the email date will be considered the submission date. After 5/8, late penalties will be assessed** for lapsed time periods (i.e., 5/9-5/14 will be reduced to A-; 5/15-5/21 to B+; 5/22-5/28 to B; 5/29-6/4 to B-). Late penalties may be reduced or waived if there are compelling extenuating circumstances. Incompletes convert later to F!

Unless requested specifically, *don't* send papers by fax or any certified/registered/signature confirmation delivery means.

7. Comments on papers and grades will be emailed to you. Papers are not usually returned.

8. *Beware plagiarism!* Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's ideas, words, or other products as your own, including failure to acknowledge and cite sources. Ideas and information borrowed from others must be acknowledged in written assignments. Acknowledgments can be made either by using quotation marks with a citation, or paraphrasing in your own words with a citation. Plagiarism will result in an F for the course and be will reported to the Dean.

9. *Honor system.* MALS and DLS students are responsible for upholding the Georgetown University Honor System and adhering to the academic standards included in the Honor Code Pledge stated below:

*In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor; and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*

10. *Disabilities statement.* If you believe you have a disability, you should contact the Academic Resource Center ([arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu)) for further information. The Center is in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.

11. *Continuity of instruction.* In the event that our class cannot meet at its normally scheduled time, continuity of instruction will be maintained via class blog, Canvas, Zoom, a rescheduled class meeting, or other means as announced.

## **Title IX at Georgetown**

<https://titleix.georgetown.edu/>

### ***Sexual Misconduct***

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX") prohibits discrimination based on sex in any educational programs, which includes sexual harassment or any acts of sexual misconduct. Title IX requires the University, upon becoming aware of any incident of sexual harassment and misconduct to respond appropriately to protect and maintain the safety of the University community, including students, faculty, and staff.

Georgetown University prohibits sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, and stalking.

Discrimination based on sex, including sexual misconduct and discrimination based on pregnancy or parenting status, subverts the University's mission and threatens permanent damage to the educational experience, careers, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff.

Please know that as a faculty member I am committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including relationship violence and sexual assault. However, University policy also requires me to report any disclosures about sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the University's response to sexual misconduct.

Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources who can provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct. These resources include:

Jen Schweer, MA, LPC Associate Director of Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention  
(202) 687-0323 [jls242@georgetown.edu](mailto:jls242@georgetown.edu)

**Erica Shirley**

Trauma Specialist  
Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS)  
(202) 687-6985  
[els54@georgetown.edu](mailto:els54@georgetown.edu)

More information about campus resources and reporting sexual misconduct can be found at: <https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/get-help>.

### ***Pregnancy Adjustments and Accommodations***

Georgetown University is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for pregnant and parenting students. Students may request adjustments based on general pregnancy needs or accommodations based on a pregnancy-related complication. Specific adjustments will be handled on a case by case basis and will depend on medical need and academic requirements.

Students seeking a pregnancy adjustment or accommodation should follow the process laid out at: <https://titleix.georgetown.edu/student-pregnancy>.